

NEIGHBORHOOD SERIES NO. 5

Santa Barbara City College Library

The **SAMARKAND**

by Walker A. Tompkins

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OVINGTON'S CASA LOMA air strip as it appeared in 1930.

The SAMARKAND

By Walker A. Tompkins

Samarkand meant "the land of heart's desire" in the archaic Persian tongue. It identified the fabulous Asian city where a mythical Queen Scheherazade spent her 1001 Arabian nights. In Santa Barbara, the melodic oriental name was first applied in 1920 to a deluxe Persian style hotel, formerly a boy's school.

As the dominating landmark of a hilly, elevated neighborhood, the Samarkand gave its name to an area bounded on the east by Oak Park, on the north by Hollister Avenue (now De la Vina Street), on the west by a ranch boundary fence centered on modern Las Positas Road, and on the south by the old Coast Highway and the railroad.

During the 19th Century the Samarkand Hills were open cattle range. By 1910 they were co-owned by Harry A. Hollister, son of the famous pioneer Col. W. W. Hollister, and rancher A. C. Greenwell. The area was first subdivided in 1920 as the Casa Loma Tract. Many of its street names carry a Hollister flavor: Peregrina, Alegria, San Onofre and Santa Anita Roads were named for arroyos on the old Hollister (*Nuestra Senora del Refugio*) Ranch west of Gaviota; Stanley Drive memorializes Hollister's youngest son, one of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Tallant Road commemorates Ed Tallant, long-time manager of the Hollister Estate Company. Clinton Terrace was named for Clinton B. Hale, Hollister's son-in-law. The road entering from the south, Treasure Drive, reportedly got its name from a legend of two highway robbers burying a saddlebag full of gold alongside that road. They killed each other in a saloon brawl in Ventura before they could return and divide their loot, which presumably is still there awaiting a finder.

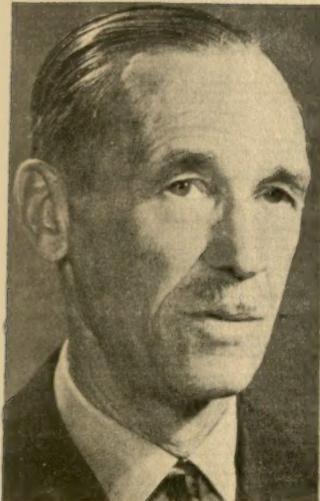
The Casa Loma, or Hill House Tract got its name from the first private dwelling to go up on the Samarkand Hills, at 3030 Samarkand Drive. It was the home of Earle Ovington, noted as the first unofficial air mail pilot in the United States, who came to Santa Barbara in 1919



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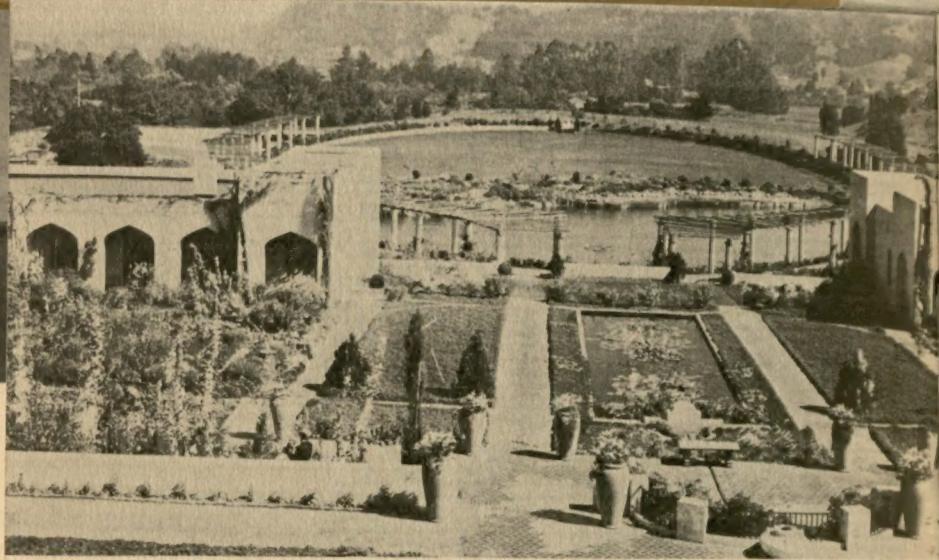
and established the Casa Loma Air Field with a 1,500 foot runway roughly paralleling today's McCaw Avenue overlooking Loreto Plaza. Although the "airport" offered no lights, hangars, repair or loading facilities — just a mowed hayfield and a windsock flying atop a small barn where Ovington kept his own aircraft — the Casa Loma was Santa Barbara's only government-listed air strip at the time, and attracted such aviation celebrities as Charles Lindbergh (flying a replica, not his original Spirit of St. Louis), Jimmy Doolittle the future Tokyo raider, Amelia Earhart, Hap Arnold, and others. The pioneer landing strip can be approximately located today as the eleventh fairway of the Community Golf Course.

The modern history of the Samarkand neighborhood dates from 1915 when Dr. Prynce Hopkins, headmaster of a private boys' school known as "Boyland" on Mission Ridge Road, purchased the 32-acre tract bounded by Las Positas Road, Hollister Avenue, Oak Park and Tallant Road. At what is now 2663 Tallant Road, Dr. Hopkins erected his new and elaborate Boyland II, a two-story main building with two wings housing dormitories and class rooms, nine stables which now serve as garages, and formal gardens with a Persian motif which rivaled, on a small scale, the famous gardens of Rome, Paris and Vienna. The garden terraces with their exotic plantings led down to an artificial lake of one and a half acres, in the form of a 200 by 400 foot ellipse enclosed by a 1,000 foot cinder racetrack. The lake was unique in that it had a sculptured relief map of the world, with the million-gallon, 28-inch-deep pond representing the oceans. There were minuscule snow-covered mountain ranges, rivers with running water, and tiny volcanos which, on occasion, fumed real smoke.



PERSONALITIES FROM THE PAST

Dr. Prynce Hopkins [left] built the Samarkand Hotel complex; Mrs. Alma Spreckles Awl tried to give it away; Earle Ovington owned and operated the pioneer airfield.



BOYLAND TERRACE In 1918. Portion of world map shows in lake.

Unfortunately, Boyland II was hexed from the start. Its opening in 1916 coincided with America's approach to World War I. Dr. Hopkins was one of the country's most vocal pacifists, at a time in American history when pacifism was equated with disloyalty. While never accusing Dr. Hopkins of being pro-German, the government felt Dr. Hopkins was impeding its military recruitment program. He was jailed and fined \$20,000 for his anti-war activities.

His school closed in 1918 when Dr. Hopkins went into self-imposed exile abroad. His mother, Mrs. Mary Hopkins, had the complex remodeled into "a small, ultra-exclusive hotel catering to the elite clientele from the East" who wintered in sunny Santa Barbara.

The former boys' school was rechristened "The Samarkand Persian Hotel". The entrance road (today's Samarkand Drive) off Hollister Avenue (De la Vina Street) was flanked by a double row of large blue concrete vases. Spilling over with flower blossoms, these vases were a Santa Barbara conversation piece for years, until they had to be removed when Samarkand Drive was widened and paved as part of the city's permanent street network.

The splendor and opulence of the Samarkand Hotel is still marveled at by old-timers as something that had to be seen to be appreciated. The dormitory villas and classrooms were converted into posh hotel suites. The Persian gardens were enlarged and replanted on a lavish scale. One casualty of the new order was the removal of the world relief map from the oval lake. What had been a major asset for teaching boys geography was not deemed appropriate for a deluxe tourist caravansary. A collonade of eighty white concrete pillars formed parentheses bracketing the reflection pool, now stocked with gold fish and surrounded by a rose pergola.

The interior of the Samarkand was redecorated in Persian style with red, brown, gold and orange colors predominating. The oriental motif was carried out in murals and oil paintings in the foyer, lobby,

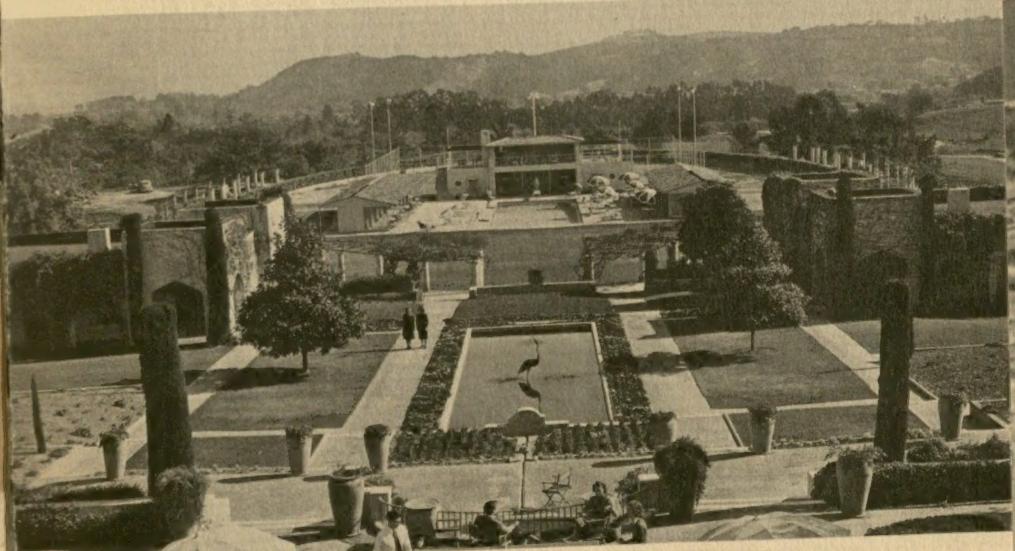


dining room, lounge, library and other public rooms. One of its muralists was the world-famous Albert Herter.

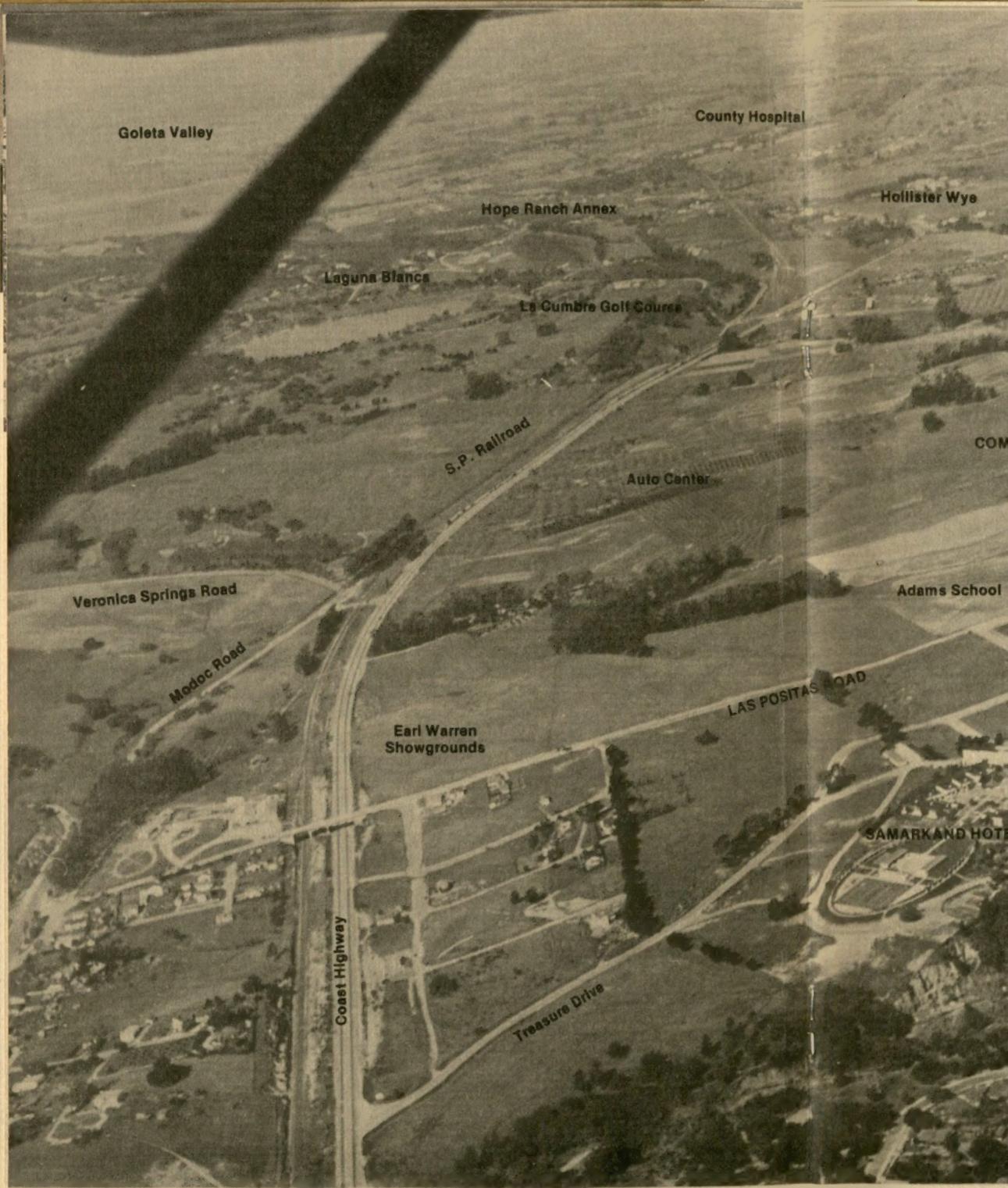
The grand opening of the Samarkand Persian Hotel came on New Year's Eve 1920, a soiree that ranks as one of the most luxurious in Santa Barbara's high society annals. Among the entertainers that night were Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, America's premier dancing team of the period. Next day's newspaper accounts of the gala event said "Miss St. Denis' Hindu dances captivated the audience, but the Samarkand captivated the dancers."

From the very first, patronage at the Samarkand Hotel failed to yield a profit. Santa Barbara boasted two other high-class hotels, the Ambassador (formerly the Potter), which burned down in 1921, and the New Arlington, which was razed after the 1925 earthquake. But even with this competition removed, the Samarkand continued to lose money, partially because it was somewhat hard to find. Although it escaped earthquake damage, the Samarkand suffered along with Santa Barbara in general from a boycott by vacationers who were nervous about visiting a locality which had suffered such a terrible disaster.

The Samarkand managed to survive, thanks to its administrator, Charles B. Hervey. Known as the "Caliph of the Samarkand", Hervey wore a satin turban, brocaded jacket, silk bloomers and curl-toed Arabian slippers. His bus boys, waitresses, cigaret girls and other staff members also affected turbans and oriental raiment. But the charm and managerial genius of this charismatic Boniface suffered two mortal blows in quick succession — the debut of the Santa Barbara Biltmore Hotel in 1928, which siphoned away the monied visitors, and the stock market crash of 1929, which reduced the Samarkand's guest list to such low levels that those remaining were transferred across town to comparable lodgings in El Mirasol Hotel.



THE TERRACE in 1940: a swimming pool has replaced the lake.



THE SAMARKAND DISTRICT AS IT LOOKED IN FEBRUARY 1940



county Hospital

Hollister Wye

La Cumbre Plaza

State Street

COMMUNITY GOLF COURSE

Adams School

LAS POSITAS ROAD

Samarkand Drive

Stanley Drive

SAMARKAND HOTEL

Sansum home

Tallant Road

Alamar Avenue

OAK PARK

Quinto Street

S IT LOOKED IN FEBRUARY 1940 — John D. Gorin Photo.

The depression decade of the 1930's saw the Samarkand alternately opening and closing. The formal gardens withered from neglect, the stately buildings fell into disrepair. Finally, in December of 1937, the once-glorious multi-million-dollar Samarkand was put on the market for a paltry \$55,000 including the 32-acre grounds.

The only bidder and new owner was Alma Spreckles, a San Francisco socialite and patron of the arts who was the millionaire widow of a sugar tycoon. Mrs. Spreckles poured more than \$215,000 into refurbishing the Samarkand, including a heated swimming pool which replaced the elliptical fish pond. She loaded the hotel itself with a fortune in personal objets d'art, including gorgeous Flemish tapestries and bales of rare oriental rugs from her own collection.

While this ambitious face-lifting was under way, Mrs. Spreckles took time out to marry Elmer Awl, one of Santa Barbara's well-known citizens. She placed Awl in charge of the Samarkand, but the out-of-the-way hostelry could not compete with the more accessible Santa Barbara Biltmore.

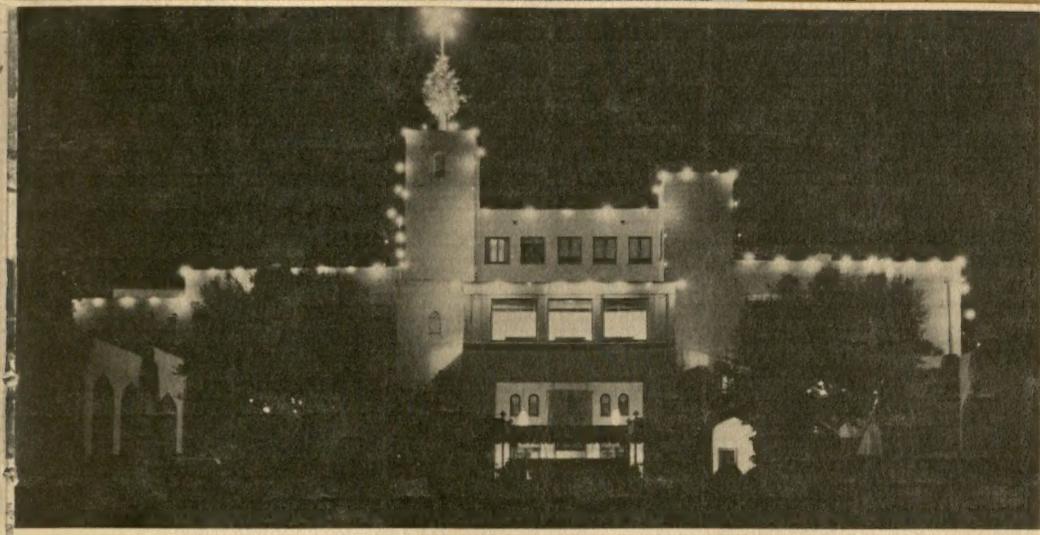
Mrs. Awl recalled that Santa Barbara was known as a watering spa during the '70s, '80s and '90s, and that the world-famous sulphur springs had been capped over when the old Potter Hotel had been built over them. Her attention was called to a surface showing of sulphur water on the banks of Mission Creek in Oak Park, just down the hill from the Samarkand, and on her property. Why not help Santa Barbara regain its former reputation among the wealthy as the "in" place to take the waters?

To the secret dismay of her neighbors, Mrs. Awl brought in drilling crews who spudded in a well in an attempt to tap the source of the sulphur seep in Oak Park. At 400 feet the boring was abandoned, after tapping plenty of malodorous fumes, making the neighborhood smell like rotten eggs, but no sulphur water. To the relief of everyone concerned, the mineral spa idea was junked.

Discouraged by lack of business and high overhead costs, Mrs. Awl at last recognized the fact that her beloved Samarkand was a white elephant and should be disposed of. Since no hotel man would buy or rent it, she decided to give it away, as a tax write-off.

At a formal banquet in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco on the night of January 11, 1940, Mrs. Awl created a sensation by offering a deed to the Samarkand Hotel and surrounding property to the Santa Barbara chapter of the March of Dimes, in the hope that her hotel could become a national rehabilitation center for polio victims. But alas, the national headquarters of the March of Dimes rejected the gift, reportedly after pressure from President F.D. Roosevelt, who wanted Warm Springs, Georgia to become the world's polio treatment center.

Her altruism rebuffed, Mrs. Awl next offered the Samarkand white elephant to the Regents of the University of California for use as a women's dormitory, then assessed at \$600,000. The Regents declined the gift with regret, explaining that it was against University policy to locate a dormitory off its Santa Barbara campus.



CHRISTMAS FLOODLIGHTING ended at the Samarkand in 1940.

So Mrs. Awl returned to the Samarkand for the last time, removed all her personal treasures, and on September 13, 1940, swapped her Santa Barbara palace for a dairy farm in Marin County worth only \$80,000.

The new owner, Leonard W. David, had no intention of reopening the Samarkand. His interest was in the unused portions of the 32-acre grounds, which he promptly sold off at a nice profit, including eight acres of town lots between Treasure Drive and the new Las Positas Road. He also sold a parcel known as "the Hippodrome" southwest of Westview Hall. To wind up his speculative activities, on the last day of the year, by coincidence the twentieth anniversary of the Samarkand's grand opening, David sold the Samarkand Hotel and 16 acres of land to a resort owner from Lake Tahoe, one D. H. Chambers, for \$60,000. Chambers, ignoring the past history of the hotel, had great plans for the Samarkand — but the old jinx of history struck again.

Close on the heels of the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the U.S. Marine Corps activated a fliers' training base at Goleta. Needing billets for hundreds of officers and trainees, the military requisitioned all the available hotel space in Santa Barbara for the duration — including the Biltmore, the Miramar, and the Samarkand.

Next door to the Samarkand, World War II made another major impact — the building of a large military hospital on "Hoff Heights," the mesa where Earl Ovington had had his airport runway, and the flatlands below which are now occupied by MacKenzie Park.

Hoff General Hospital consisted of more than 100 temporary buildings, a commissary, mess halls, linen supply depot, surgical and medical wards, and personnel barracks, supporting a 1,300-bed hospital facility. Its 46 acres had a network of more than a mile of covered sidewalks, three miles of utility lines, and a mile of gas piping. During the four years of its operation, Hoff treated more than 27,500 military patients.



HOFF GENERAL HOSPITAL overlooked a citrus grove which is today's Loreto Plaza. Las Positas Road joins State Street and San Roque Road at lower right. MacKenzie Park now occupies area at left margin, golf course at top margin. — U.S. Army Signal Corps photo courtesy of Lou Schickram.

Deactivated in 1946, Hoff's substandard wards and barracks were moved to places like Pilgrim Terrace and Turnpike Road to give a few years' service in relieving Santa Barbara's severe postwar housing shortage. The last of the war surplus hospital buildings were bulldozed in 1960 to make way for MacKenzie Park.

Few traces remain of Hoff General Hospital. The chapel was moved to San Roque Church to serve as a parish house. The hospital administration building now houses the Army Reserve Center at 3227 State Street. The hospital's water supply tank still stands on Las Positas Road near the entrance to McCaw Avenue. Although owned by the city water department, it is no longer in service. A concrete wall at the base of the hill overlooking MacKenzie Park was part of a never-completed therapeutic swimming tank under construction at war's end.

The Marine officers who occupied the Samarkand during the war gave the hotel what neighbors called "a shameful beating", but Mr. Chambers' damage claims were promptly paid by a special federal agency set up to handle similar matters. The Samarkand never regained the high caliber of prewar years, however. Resident historian Michael H. Schnapp wrote, "During wartime, the principal interest had turned to the sale of beverages at the bar. There the owner, Mr. Chambers, often appeared as the generous host, and in his declining years, was his own best customer. Within this environment the

Samarkand was reputed to have assumed the proportions of a hideaway, where in order to avoid interference from law-enforcement agencies, special precautions were taken to conceal such deviations."

This notoriety gave a rather unsavory denouement to the Samarkand saga, which ended in 1950 when Chambers died. Three years later his estate sold the entire complex for \$275,000 to a Shanghai merchant named J. M. Kantzler. His attempts to make the hotel show a profit ended, as usual, in failure. Kantzler recouped some of his investment by selling off more land, mostly along the edges of Oak Park, thereby trimming the Samarkand property to half its 1920 area. Meanwhile the roundabout neighborhood was fast filling up with houses. Twelve per cent date before 1940; 80 per cent were built before 1959. By 1978 the Samarkand area was near full development.

Across Las Positas Road to the west, the old Parks ranch was split up into the Community Golf Course, Earl Warren Showgrounds, and the campus of Adams Elementary School. Probably the most elegant home on the Samarkand Hills was that of Dr. William David Sansum at 2800 Tallant Road, a short distance from his world-famous Sansum Clinic next door to the Cottage Hospital.

On December 15, 1955, Kantzler conveyed title to the hotel and 16 acres of grounds for a reported \$500,000 to a corporation known as the Samarkand of Santa Barbara Inc., who at long last brought the facility to its true destiny — that of a health care center. There were 150 residents at the Samarkand on June 29, 1966, when the retirement facility was purchased by the Evangelical Covenant Church of America. During the first decade of its new ownership as a life care facility, the Samarkand thrived. It doubled its occupancy and made extensive capital improvements, including the convalescent center and resident health center at 2566 Treasure Drive.

The Samarkand neighborhood could point with pride to one of America's most beautiful and prestigious retirement centers in its midst, but the asset was not without its price. For half a century the hotel had been the neighborhood's principal tax payer. Now, because it was owned by a church organization, it was legally exempt, and the Samarkand was withdrawn from Santa Barbara's tax rolls.

The Samarkand District Improvement Association, one of the most active in the city, reports that as of 1974, the last available census, there were 630 dwelling units on 184 acres of land (not counting the Samarkand residents) for a population density of less than 11 persons per acre, one of the lowest in Southern California.

"If Samarkand means 'the land of heart's desire,'" states an Association spokesman, "the name certainly fits our neighborhood, since three out of four of us have achieved America's fondest dream — ownership of our own single-family home."

Aerial photo © 1940 by John D. Gorin.



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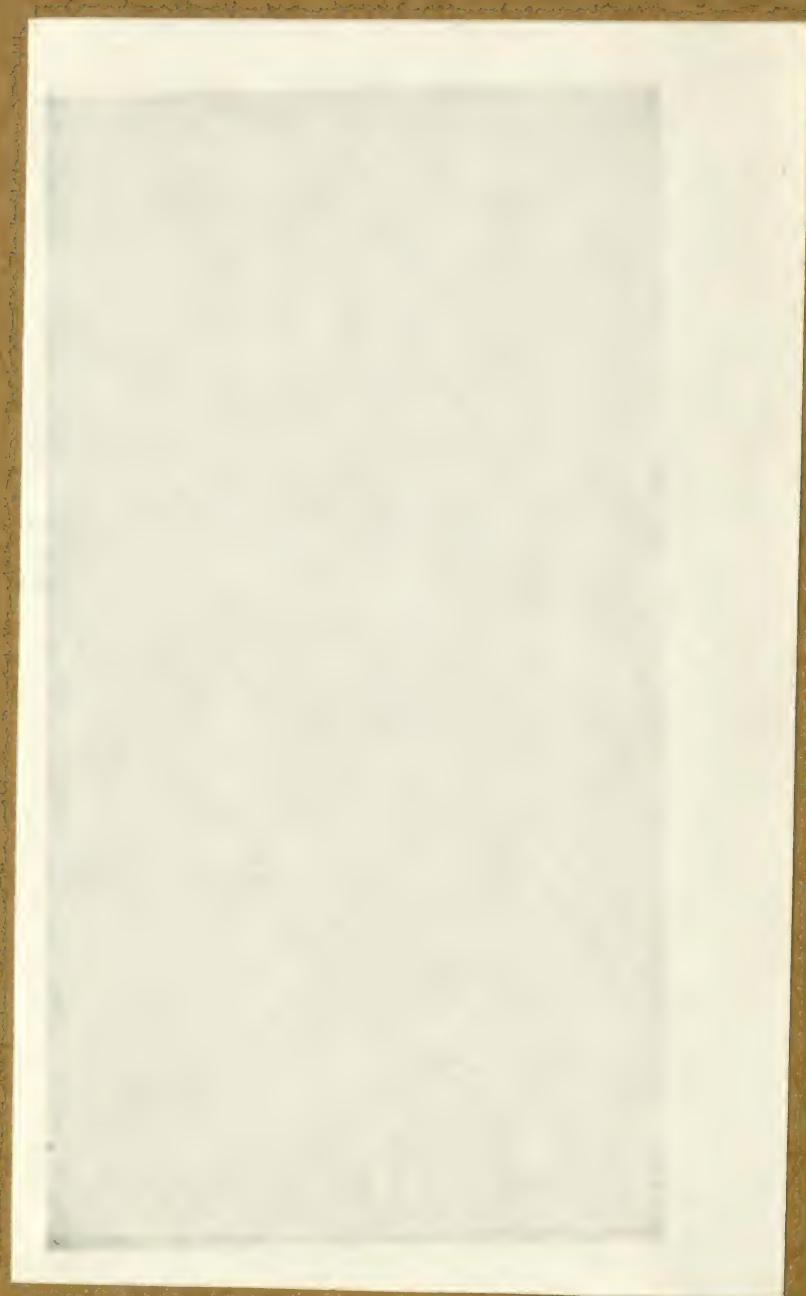
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NEIGHBORHOOD SERIES NO. 6

MONTECITO

by Walker A. Tompkins

Santa Barbara City College Library

Presented by

Santa Barbara Board of Realtors



Looking toward Santa Barbara on Channel Drive, Montecito, in 1906.

MONTECITO

By Walker A. Tompkins

In the spring of 1769, while Spanish soldiers were busy erecting a Royal Presidio on the site of Santa Barbara, their spiritual leader, Padre Junipero Serra OFM, was scouting for a place to put his tenth California mission. He selected a spot in Montecito's beautiful East Valley, where an Indian trail snaked up a canyon. That trail is known today as Hot Springs Road.

But Father Serra died shortly thereafter, and in 1786 it was his successor, Fermin Lasuen, who arrived to establish Mission Santa Barbara. Fr. Lasuen rejected Montecito as a mission site, believing it to be too far removed from the protection of the presidio. The roundabout oak groves — Montecito means "little woods" — swarmed with grizzly bears, wolf packs, and human renegades. Prudently, Lasuen located Santa Barbara Mission four miles west, thus depriving Montecito of what would have been an historical landmark of the first magnitude.

During the Hispanic era, 1782-1846, the soldiers of the presidio fell as much as twenty years behind in their salaries. Hence, to compensate soldiers reaching retirement age, free parcels of the "Santa Barbara Pueblo Lands" were awarded them. These lands, granted by the King of Spain for the support of Santa Barbara, extended from Tucker's Grove to the Rincon, between the foothills and the beach. Most of the soldiers chose 50-acre plots in what became known as "Old Spanish Town," starting on the west where Hot Springs and Cold Spring Creeks join to form Montecito Creek, and extending along East Valley Road, then an ox-cart trail, as far as today's Montecito Village.

Montecito was thus founded by some of Santa Barbara's "first families," bearing such proud names as Jaurez, Romero, Olivas, Robles, Dominguez, Lopez and Lorenzana. Many of their descendants still live on land owned by their forebears nearly 200 years ago.

The matriarch of one such family, Dona Marcellina Feliz de Dominguez, planted a grapevine slip near her adobe at what is now 850 Parra Grande Lane. She irrigated it with water carried in an olla from the nearby creek. The vine thrived. Its trunk grew to 14 inches in diameter; its arbor covered one acre; it produced six tons of grapes

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per year. In 1876 it was shipped to Philadelphia for the California exhibit at the Centennial Exposition.

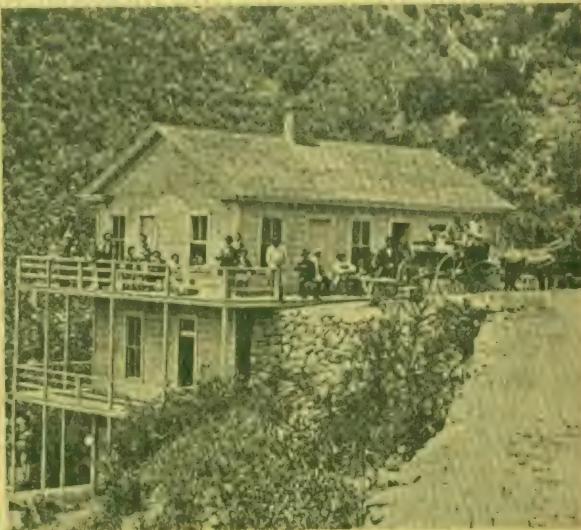
In prehistoric times, the Indians discovered a group of hot mineral springs in a canyon above Montecito, the waters of which had magical powers to heal the sick. This was verified by sailors of a later day, and by members of the American regiment which occupied Santa Barbara at the end of the Mexican War.

In 1855 an ailing '49er named Wilbur Curtiss came to Santa Barbara with a life expectancy of six months. A 100-year-old Chumash Indian led Curtiss up Hot Springs Canyon to the ancient spa. The "miracle waters" restored Curtiss to such robust health that in 1862 he filed a homestead claim on the Hot Springs and thus became Montecito's first American settler. He built the first of four wooden hotels at the springs, each destroyed by the periodic forest fires which swept the mountains. The last Montecito Hot Springs Resort hotel was lost in the Coyote Fire of 1964. Still privately owned, the springs remain today an important water source, although no longer exploited for their therapeutic value.

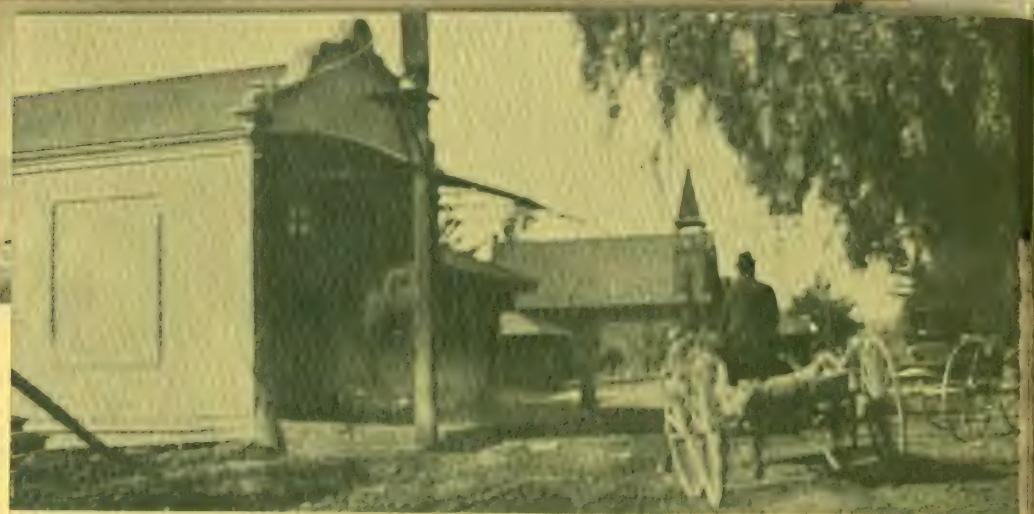
East Valley Catholics, seeking to avoid the long walk to worship at the Old Mission, in 1857 joined with workmen from San Ysidro Ranch to build an adobe chapel on the Jaurez property at 53 East Valley Road. Known as Carmelo Mission, it served until a wooden church was built in 1898, the predecessor to the spectacular modern edifice of 1936, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, built as a pueblo.

Montecito's first public school was built in 1858 on land given by Nemecio Dominguez. There was no money for a roof, so the school children studied that first winter with the blue sky overhead.

July 16 used to be celebrated as "Montecito Day" by the old-time Spanish residents, and was always marked by a gala fandango and fiesta at the Lorenzana adobe on Parra Grande Lane. This fete died



La Parra Grande [Spanish for "the big grapevine"] as it looked in 1870. On the right, the third wooden hotel at the Montecito Hot Springs, a popular tourist spa through the 1890s, 1300 feet above sea level.



Montecito Village in horse and buggy days centered on Buell's Store, left; the telephone company office; and the original Montecito Presbyterian Church, erected in 1887.

out around 1886 due to the rapid Americanization of Montecito.

Newton M. Coats was in the vanguard of that American wave of settlers, arriving by covered wagon in 1858. He bought a farm from the Santa Barbara Common Council for 75 cents an acre. A building lot on that same land, now part of the Birnam Wood Golf Course, in 1979 costs \$100,000 and up. The price of Montecito land had risen to \$50 an acre by 1867 when Montecito's "three colonels" arrived: Silas Bond, William Alston Hayne, and B. T. Dinsmore. Col. Bond established Montecito's first large horticultural nursery on Hot Springs Road. His neighbor, Col. Hayne, a Confederate veteran, built a Southern style plantation house and laid out the first of Montecito's famous formal gardens. Col. Dinsmore, a native of Maine, bought the historic San Ysidro Ranch from its Mexican owners and planted Montecito's first orange grove. He also acquired the Jaurez adobe, built in 1830 at 461 San Ysidro Road, which is now called the "Hosmer Adobe" for Dinsmore's son-in-law, Tom Hosmer, who purchased the Jaurez farm in 1871. (The Hosmer Adobe, the San Ysidro Adobe, and the Massini Adobe at 29 Sheffield Drive, are the principal historic landmarks remaining from Montecito's old Spanish days.)

When the first Americans began arriving, Montecito was still a raw frontier. Outlaws of the turbulent 1850s lurked in its bosques. California grizzly bears, now extinct, were so numerous in Montecito that as recently as 1869 a \$50 bounty was offered for every beast slain inside the community. One specimen weighed over 1,000 pounds.

Among early Yankee arrivals was a silver miner from Nevada, William M. Eddy, who founded the Santa Barbara County National Bank in 1875. The following year an Englishman, Josiah Doulton, scion of the royal chinaware family, bought 20 acres on the Montecito waterfront. He named his place "Ocean View." When hard times

forced his wife to take in boarders, the place became popular with tourists and the name was changed to the Spanish "Miramar" — the forerunner of today's far-famed Miramar Hotel and Convention Center. Its neighbor, the Biltmore Hotel, came on the scene in 1927.

The Yankee population increased steadily, leading to the establishment of a U.S. post office in the summer of 1886. An American village had taken root around the intersection of East Valley and San Ysidro Roads, where a country store was run by Percy Buell. In the fall of 1887, El Montecito Presbyterian Church was built there, following another Protestant Church, All-Saints-by-the-Sea Episcopal, which had been started in 1869.

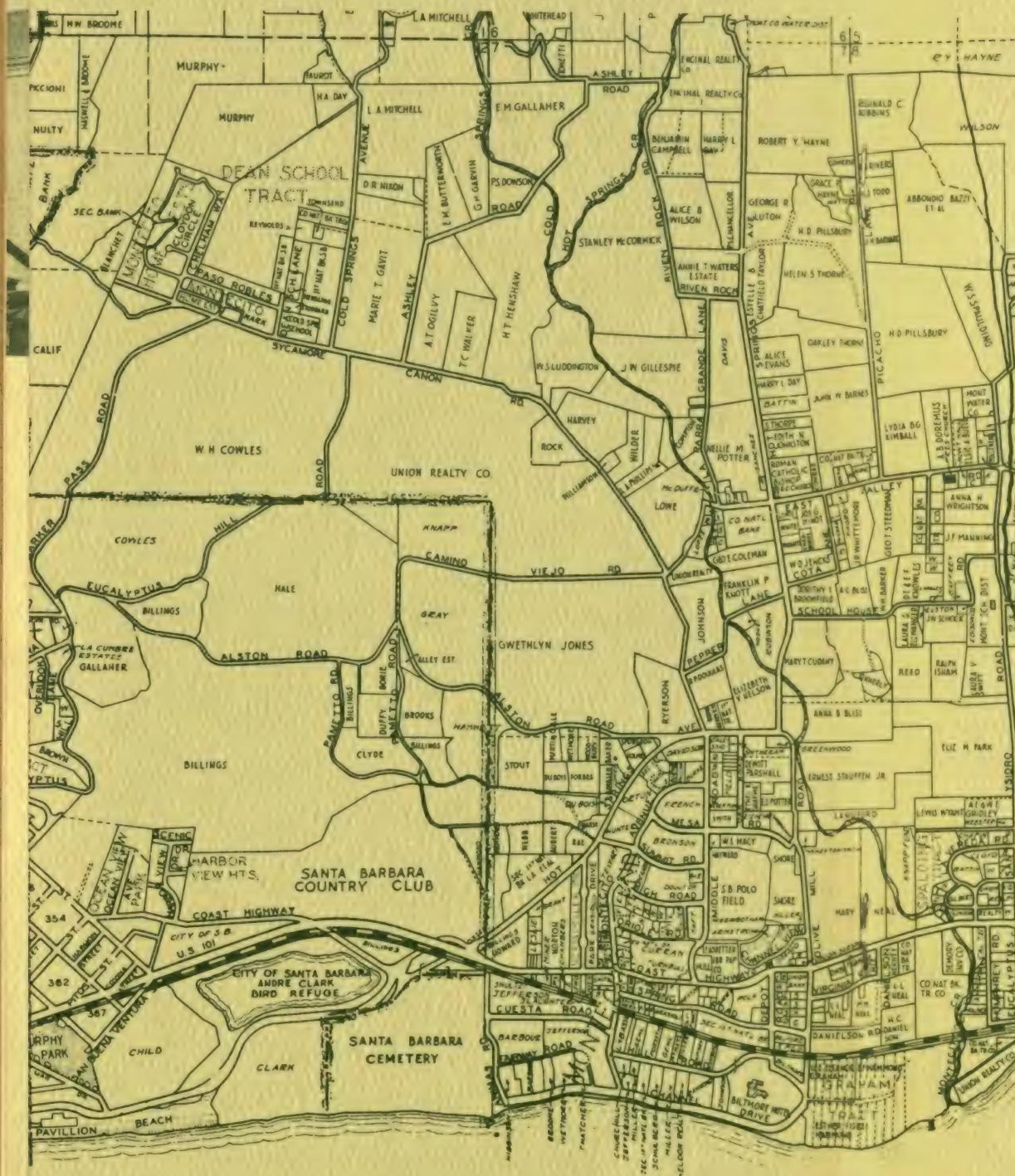
The year 1887 saw Montecito's wooded dells echoing to the first blast of a locomotive whistle, as the Southern Pacific extended its Coast Line as far as Goleta. Montecito Station was built adjacent to the future Biltmore Hotel, giving Depot Road its name. Montecito soon lost both its railway depot and its U.S. post office to Santa Barbara, however.

The year the railroad arrived, a prominent San Francisco banker, William H. Crocker, and his mother-in-law Mrs. Caroline Sperry, bought Rancho Las Fuentes ("the fountains," so called because of the numerous artesian wells and ponds on the ranch), south of East Valley Road. The Crocker-Sperry Ranch was devoted to citrus, and a large sandstone-block packing house was built to handle the lemon crops grown by most of Montecito's ranchers. A huge reservoir, the size of a football field, stood until 1965 near the present gatehouse of the Birnam Wood Golf Course. The upper end of the Crocker-Sperry Ranch is still called China Flat by old-timers because of the Chinese stone masons who camped there in the 1880s. The ranch was inherited by Mrs. Sperry's daughter, Princess Elizabeth Poniatowski, in 1906.

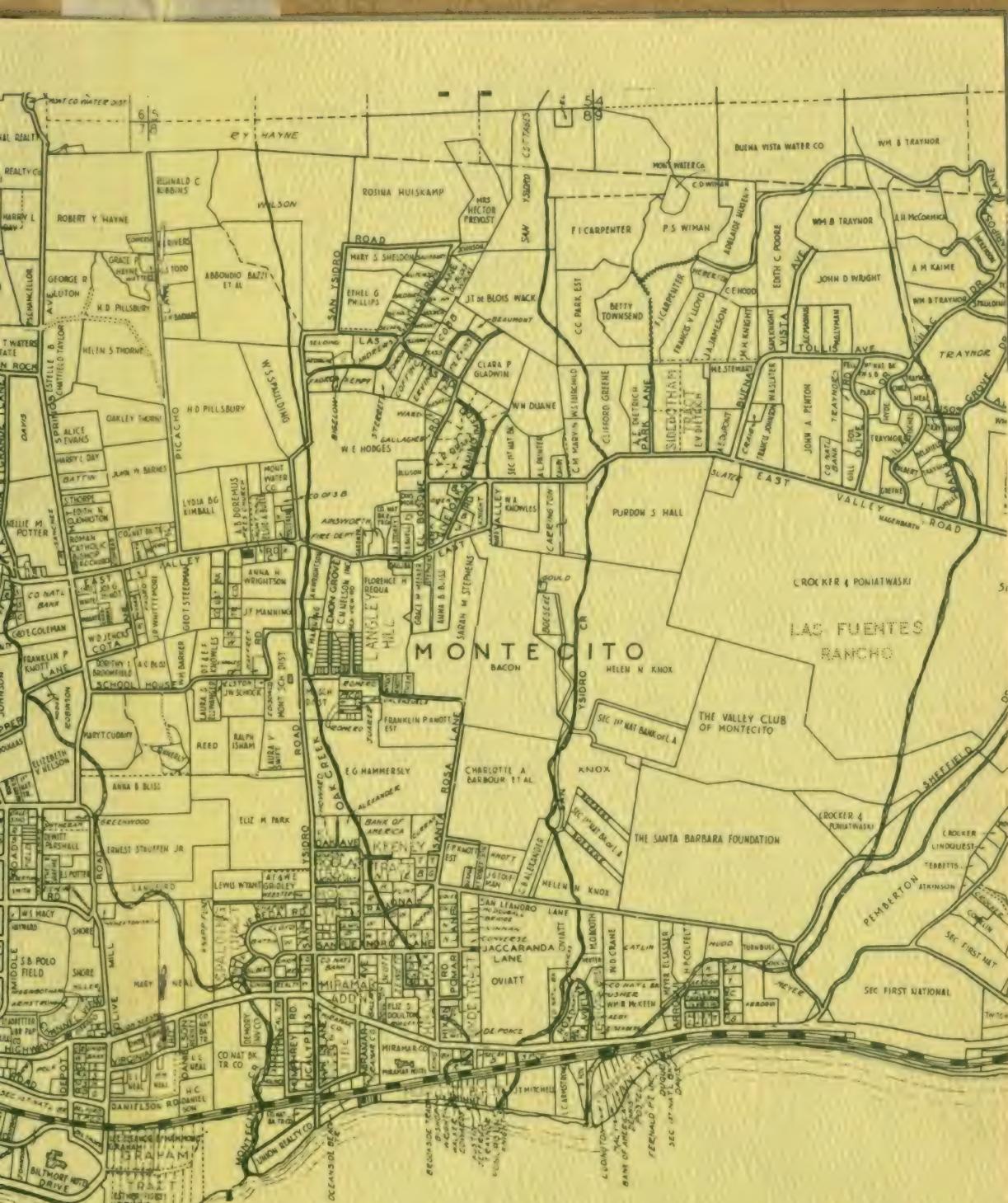
Two pioneer brothers, George and Fred Gould, planted olive groves along a "trail to the beach" which was named Olive Mill Road after the Goulds built a stone olive mill in 1893. The mill, "El Molino," is now the home of actress Lena Horne at 200 Olive Mill Road.



The Crocker-Sperry lemon packery as it looked in 1892. The rooftop domes were in the shape of yellow lemons. The remodeled structure now houses the Birnam Wood Golf Club.



PRINCIPAL LANDHOLDERS IN MONTECITO



SHOLDERS IN MONTECITO DURING THE LATE 1920s

More and more wealthy people, drawn to Santa Barbara when it was in its heyday as a fashionable health resort, began establishing luxurious private estates in Montecito during the '90s. This trickle became a flood after the Potter Hotel opened in 1902, luring such ultra-rich names as Rockefeller, Carnegie, Fleischmann, Cudahy, DuPont, Swift, McCormick, Bliss and others. Many of them fell in love with the area's incomparable scenery and climate and began developing fabulous estates in suburban Montecito, ranging in size from 30 to 200 acres. The ruling echelons of the millionaire migration were dubbed "The Hill Barons" because their palatial mansions occupied hilltops overlooking Montecito's beautiful woodlands.

A working-class population to serve the needs of the wealthy increased in Montecito and social patterns began to emerge. The original Hispanic inhabitants kept pretty much to themselves in the shady bosques of Old Spanish Town, where they built two dance halls, a cantina, taverns, and a co-op store known as "La Cooperacion" which was destroyed in the disastrous floods of January, 1914.

The middle-class Americans built two recreation centers in Montecito Village, Montecito Hall in 1897, Montecito Home Club in 1908. A popular social center for the elite was "The Peppers" at 430 Hot Springs Road, built around 1900. Its ballroom, with a balcony to accommodate a large orchestra, was the scene of a piano recital by Paderewski, a vocal concert by Madame Schumann-Heink, and the dancing debut of Santa Barbara's world-famous Martha Graham.

In 1915 Mrs. William Miller Graham, an active social leader, built the octagonal "Country Theatre" on lower Middle Road. Its auditorium seated 320 playgoers around a center stage, a theatrical concept far ahead of its time. Fire destroyed the theater in the early 1920s, leaving only the existing colonnade of white pillars.

Sports activity in Montecito followed caste lines. Farmers,



"Casa Bienvenida", one of Montecito's 200 elegant estates, as it appeared in 1930.



A tree growing through a split boulder gave its name to McCormick's "Riven Rock" estate.

servants, chauffeurs, gardeners, tradesmen — they played sandlot baseball or croquet, being unable to afford the more aristocratic pastimes such as golf, polo, or tennis.

In 1894 the Santa Barbara Country Club was incorporated by a group headed by Judge R. B. Canfield. An 18-hole links was laid out between the highway and Channel Drive, from Santa Barbara Cemetery (founded in 1867) easterly to the present Biltmore Hotel, where a clubhouse was erected. This redwood building burned down and was replaced by an elegant structure at 1070 Fairway Road. When the golf course was moved inland in 1907 to an area north of the Bird Refuge, the former clubhouse was converted into a residence by Mr. and Mrs. John Percival Jefferson, who called it "Miraflores." A later owner deeded the mansion to the Music Academy of the West.

A new golf clubhouse was designed by Bertram G. Goodhue and built in 1915 on Summit Road. In 1922 the club changed its name to the Montecito Country Club. For many years it was privately owned by Avery Brundage, who sold it to the Japanese interests now operating the course. The club lost nearly half its membership in 1928, when Major Max C. Fleischmann and others of similar financial standing formed the Valley Club of Montecito, purchasing ranch land south of East Valley Road on either side of Sheffield Drive. It was joined in 1968 by the Birnam Wood Country Club, owned by Robert McLean, publisher of the News-Press. It occupies the former Crocker-Sperry ranch, and the original sandstone lemon packery was converted into an elegant clubhouse which has become a center of Montecito social life.

Tennis was highly favored by Montecito's haut monde, activity centering on several courts at the Willis Knowles estate at 1675 East Valley Road, site of today's Knowlwood Tennis Club.

Many Montecitans are unaware that a polo field once flourished along Middle Road. In 1913 William H. Bartlett bought 34 acres on Robertson Hill and built a polo grounds complete with grandstands, stables, and a luxurious mission-style clubhouse which opened in the spring of 1916. Polo became a casualty of the 1930s depression, but the clubhouse, remodeled as a residence, still stands at 184 Middle Road.

Montecito's popular image involves its "millionaire estates," which enjoyed a boom around 1920 when the area's shady lanes were traveled by as many as 3,000 cars a day bringing tradesmen to and from mansions in progress of building. America's foremost architects, including the likes of George Washington Smith (whose home at 240 Middle Road, the first of over 30 he built in Montecito, still stands); Francis T. Underhill, Bertram G. Goodhue and Frank Lloyd Wright were erecting English manorhouses, Normandy castles, Italian palazzos, Cape Cod Colonials and incredible marble palaces at the end of tree-lined lanes.

Even to list Montecito's fabulous estates is obviously outside the scope of this pamphlet. In 1930 Harold G. Chase, a noted realtor, published a roster of over 200 "major" estates. Among them were McCormick's "Riven Rock," Hammond's "Bonnymede," Bothin's "Piranhurst," Murphy's "Rancho Tijada" (since 1945 the campus of Westmont College), Knapp's "Arcady" (since subdivided), Peabody's "Solano" (later the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions), Gray's "Graholm" (now the Brooks Institute of Photography), Mme. Ghana-Walska's "Lotusland," Gillespie's "El Fuerides," Bliss's "Casa Dorinda," Ludington's "Val Verde," Clark's "Bellosguardo" — an entire book could be written about any of these estates, and there are countless others.

The enactment of federal income tax laws in 1914, the stock market crash of 1929, the rising cost of servants, all combined to democratize the incredible saga of Montecito's super-wealthy citizens. The era of baronial snobbery, mind-boggling opulence and Croesus-like extravagance is almost gone. Celebrities still flock to Montecito, show business stars and captains of industry and finance, but the belle epoch is gone forever, the victim of a changing economy.



A 1917 costume ball at "The Peppers", an elite Montecito social center.



High in the Santa Ynez Mountains stands Juncal Dam and Jameson Lake, the source of Montecito's municipal water supply. [Photo courtesy News-Press]

Water supply problems have plagued Southern California's semi-arid climate from earliest times, and Montecito was no exception. In 1924 it became necessary to bore Doulton Tunnel into the mountain wall. This horizontal well met Montecito's increasing water needs until Juncal Dam was completed in 1930 at the 2,224-foot elevation of the watershed of the upper Santa Ynez River. This concrete arch structure, 160 feet high by 350 feet wide, impounded 7,050 acre feet of water in Jameson Lake. During the nearly half century that has followed, siltation and debris from run-off have reduced the lake's capacity to 6,000 acre feet. Montecito Water District water reaches its consumers via 2.2-mile-long Doulton Tunnel and a system of pipelines terminating in ten foothill reservoirs.

Recognizing Montecito as a rustic, sylvan Eden which is unique in America, the owners of Montecito property have long waged battles with developers, who were known to move in on the edge of a big estate and start work on an objectionable house on a small lot, thus forcing the estate owner, in self defense, to pay a premium price to gain title to the offending project. In 1929 the State Legislature passed a Planning and Enabling Act to protect communities like Montecito from ruination by over-development. Montecito residents, led by John A. Jameson, John D. Wright, Dr. Rexwald Brown and Dwight Murphy, pushed for and got a county zoning ordinance, the first such in California history, enabling Montecito to restrict lot sizes to the present average of eight acres, none being below one acre. Lot splits are rigidly controlled. Wherever possible, utilities are kept under ground.

Montecito has always resisted business incursions into their

residential zones. This led to a head-on confrontation with the State Division of Highways in 1927 when a widening and commercialization of the Coast Highway was proposed. John Jameson led a crusade to raise funds to buy land contiguous to the highway in order to assist the State in creating California's first scenic parkway, using plant center dividers and landscaped edges, including frontage roads. A billboards and commercial housing were banned. The Montecito Parkway became a model for cities from coast to coast, and was the genesis of California's freeway system. The segment between S. Ysidro and Olive Mill Roads was completed by 1937. After the hiatus of World War II, the parkway was extended to Sheffield Drive in 1949, to form one of the most beautiful approaches to a city to be found anywhere.

Alarmed by the post-war population explosion which was fast eroding the esthetic beauty of Santa Barbara and the Goleta Valley, the Montecito Protective and Improvement Association was formed in 1948 to keep out sidewalks, concrete curbs and gutters, advertising signs, widening of streets and other threats to the unspoiled rural location of Montecito. The Association is considered to be one of the most powerful citizen bodies in the United States, Montecito's "watchdog for the people".

Montecito has always enjoyed a cordial relationship with neighboring Santa Barbara, but its citizens adamantly opposed annexation to the larger city. Montecito's growth tripled in the 50-year period between the 3,000 inhabitants of 1928 and today's 9,500, but it would have reached 50,000 had Santa Barbara's erratic zoning laws been in effect. Montecito residents feel they have proved that as long as they can control their own rate of growth, they can maintain their independence as one of the most desirable — and envied — places to live in all the world.

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"THE WATERFRONT" by Walker A. Tompkins

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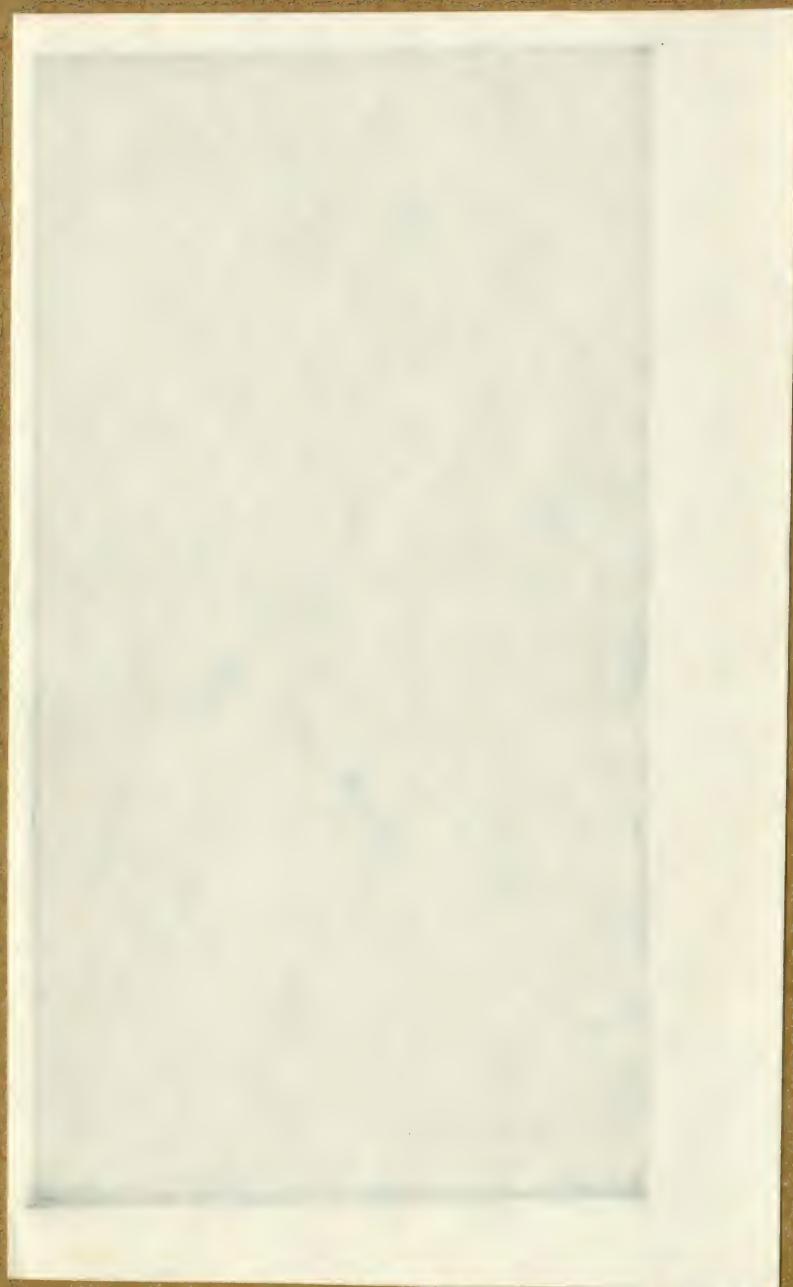
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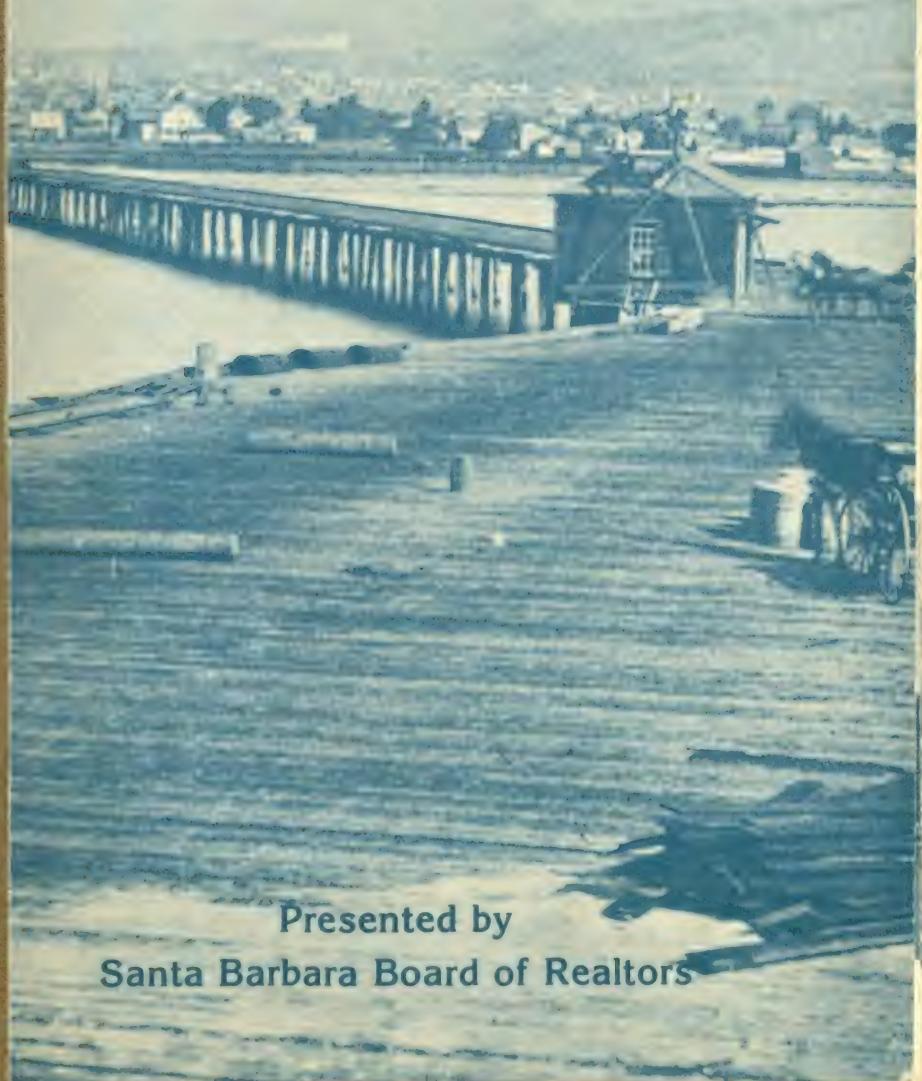


NEIGHBORHOOD SERIES NO. 7

Santa Barbara City College Library

The WATERFRONT

by Walker A. Tompkins



Presented by
Santa Barbara Board of Realtors



Two wharfs, Chapala Street and Stearns, show on this 1877 lithograph.

The WATERFRONT

By Walker A. Tompkins

The Spaniards who founded Santa Barbara in 1782 were soldiers and priests, not seafaring men. Perhaps that is why no provision was made for a seaport. The waterfront, extending 3.7 miles from Shoreline Park to the Bird Refuge, offers no natural headlands to create a safe anchorage. Early-day mariners dreaded Santa Barbara's exposed roadstead so much they used to drop anchor a mile offshore, ready to slip their cables and head for the open sea if foul weather threatened.

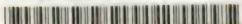
In pre-Columbian times five Chumash Indian villages flourished along Santa Barbara's waterfront: Mispu, on the SBCC campus; El Banos, at the foot of Bath Street; Chief Yanonanit's large rancheria between Bath and Chapala Streets; Amolomol, at the mouth of Mission Creek; and Swetete, on the Clark Estate above the Bird Refuge. Along this crescent strand the aborigines launched their sea-going "tomols," plank canoes which were unique on the North American continent.

As recently as 50 years ago the ocean used to cover what today is the City College football field, dashing its surf against cliffs now paneled by La Playa Stadium. Leadbetter Beach did not exist. But just around the corner east of Castle Rock (a long-vanished promontory) semi-sheltered West Beach became the traditional landing place for visitors. It is thus overlaid with history covering two centuries.

In 1769 Captain Gaspar de Portola's expedition camped at the site of today's Moreton Bay Fig Tree, the first white men to visit Santa Barbara by land. Captain Juan Bautista de Anza hugged the same shoreline in 1774. Captain George Vancouver, a British scientist on a globe-girdling voyage of exploration, anchored off West Beach in 1793 and filled his water butts from a spring at modern Pershing Park.

Starting around 1800 the Barbareños lighted a lantern at dusk and hoisted it to the top of a tall sycamore near the beach. That tree's truncated, 500-year-old husk still clings to life at the northwest corner

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of Milpas and Quinientos Streets. A designated historical landmark, the Sailors' Sycamore is known both as Santa Barbara's first lighthouse and its oldest living pioneer.

The waterfront is no stranger to disaster. On December 21, 1812, Southern California suffered a cataclysmic earthquake that generated a mammoth wave or tsunami, which sent a 50-foot wall of water thundering across Santa Barbara's flat beaches and inland as far as Peabody Stadium and Anapamu Street. It did no real damage.

Another near-disaster involved man, not nature. In 1818 two heavily-armed frigates captained by Hippolyte de Bouchard, a freebooter hired to harrass Spanish shipping and seaports on behalf of Argentina's war of independence, hove to off the Sailors' Sycamore and would have landed a raiding party had it not been for a clever stratagem by Jose de la Guerra, commandant of the Royal Presidio. Legend has it that he gathered a band of volunteers who rode their horses round and round a clump of willows near East Beach, tricking the enemy into believing that Santa Barbara was too heavily defended to risk an attack. Bouchard sailed away, and years later Voluntario Street was so named to memorialize De la Guerra and his intrepid volunteers for saving the town.

During the first four decades of the 19th Century, hide and tallow ships from Boston made Santa Barbara a regular port of call, as vividly depicted in Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast." A hide collection station was erected at the foot of Chapala Street in 1828, over which flew the first American flag to appear in Santa Barbara. The Star-Spangled Banner became official in August 1846 when the American warship "Congress" anchored off West Beach. Commodore Richard Field Stockton came ashore with a platoon of U.S. Marines to claim Santa Barbara as a prize of war from Mexico. Stockton was followed nine months later by a U.S. Army transport which discharged a company of New York Volunteers to serve as occupation troops.



The "Sailors' Sycamore" [left], and Castle Rock, victim of 1925 earthquake.



The lower West Side and the waterfront as seen from the Mesa in 1898.

Following statehood for California, the U.S. government built a chain of lighthouses along the West Coast, one of which was on the Mesa a mile east of Arroyo Burro. Built in 1856, it fell in the 1925 earthquake and was replaced by the automated beacon.

During the 1850s and 60s Santa Barbara was isolated from the outside world by lack of roads or a railway. It was a dangerous business lightering freight and passengers through the surf from coastal vessels. Steps to convert Santa Barbara into a seaport were first taken in 1865 when a group of business men including Dr. Samuel B. Brinkerhoff, Captain Martin Kimberly, Dr. John Shaw, Isaac J. Sparks and Lewis T. Burton formed the Santa Barbara Wharf Company. In 1868 they built a short pier out from the foot of Chapala Street, not far enough to permit deep-draft vessels to tie up.

In 1871 John Peck Stearns, a one-legged Vermonter who operated a lumber yard at the foot of State Street, petitioned a hostile City Council for a permit to build a 1,500 foot wharf out to deep water. This permission came reluctantly because of bitter political opposition from the rival Chapala Street wharf syndicate.

Stearns borrowed \$40,000 from the town's richest man, Colonel W. W. Hollister, leased a pile driver from Port Hueneme, and by mid-September of 1872 had a wharf ready for Santa Barbara's first steamer to tie up, the freighter Anne Stoffer. Passenger steamers, including the venerable old sidewheeler Orizaba, followed by the Senator, the Mohongo, the Kalorama, the Queen of the Pacific and many others, made Santa Barbara a port of call for years to come. Freighters, both sail and steam, which previously had had to jettison lumber cargos overboard to float ashore on incoming tides, now could unload directly to a warehouse at the pierhead. It was the beginning of boom times.

Soon wealthy healthseekers made Santa Barbara a fashionable resort. To accommodate the throngs of swimmers, sunbathers and boaters who flocked to the beach, in 1876 the city extended horse-drawn streetcar service to West Beach. The sheltered area in the lea of the Mesa was historically the favorite spot for Barbareños to bathe, first the Indians and later the Hispanic settlers. Americans



continued the custom — Bath Street is so named because it led to the public bathing beach — and from the 1870s onward a series of bath houses, later equipped with heated swimming pools, stood in the vicinity of Plaza del Mar park. The streetcars were electrified in 1896 and extended the length of East Beach.

Stearns Wharf did not provide Santa Barbara with a real harbor. Early in 1878 a severe sou'easter hit the waterfront, beaching all anchored vessels, destroying the Chapala Street pier forever, and smashing out a 900-foot section of Stearns Wharf. Stearns, outraged by the exorbitant taxes the city imposed on his facility, refused to rebuild the wharf unless the tax was rescinded. This was done. The wharf reopened in July, but in December a waterspout funneled across the anchorage, pounding vessels into Stearns Wharf again and causing damage which could not be repaired until the following spring.

The Santa Barbara Yacht Club was incorporated in 1887, using Stearns' home at the foot of the wharf for a clubhouse, until it was washed out to sea by a winter storm. The year 1887 also saw the arrival of the railroad in Santa Barbara. This cut heavily into the steamship lines' passenger traffic, but economical ocean freight kept the ships coming until their era was ended by trucks and automobiles.

As a result of the arrival of the railroad, in 1888 Stearns added a wye from the wharf to East Beach between Anacapa and Santa Barbara Streets, carrying a railroad spur which connected with the main line. High seas destroyed the wye in 1898 and it was never rebuilt. Today only a short stub of the original wye remains jutting from the wharf.

The railroad was not completed through to San Francisco until 1901. Anticipating a new tourist boom, in 1902 the luxurious 600-room Potter Hotel was opened on the site of Yanonali's Indian village between Bath and Chapala Streets. This concentrated the city's burgeoning tourist trade along West Beach, where it remains to the present.

Stearns died in 1902 and his widow hired Frank Smith, veteran wharfinger from the Serena pier near Carpinteria, to manage her



Castle Rock, the municipal bath house "Los Baños del Mar," and the Edison Company's "pleasure pier" [photograph taken at the turn of the century].



The 600-room Potter Hotel dominated West Beach from 1902 until 1921.

affairs until 1917, when Pat Johnson and his wife Bertha moved into the wharfinger's apartments above the wharf warehouse. The Johnsons were the most popular figures on the waterfront for the next third of a century. Their regime included the Prohibition years, during which they discreetly failed to notice rum-runners unloading cargoes of contraband booze, for fear of gangland reprisals.

In 1915 a 15-foot concrete seawall had been built to protect West Beach. Only three feet of that wall remain visible above the sand dunes today.

Aviation also enters the local waterfront story. Starting in 1916 the Loughead Brothers Aircraft Manufacturing Company on lower State Street built hydroplanes which they launched from a wooden ramp on West Beach directly in front of today's El Patio Motel. Changing their name to Lockheed, the brothers became leaders of America's aviation industry. Santa Barbara's first "airport" opened in 1919 parallel to East Beach between Milpas Street and the Bird Refuge. Its landing strip was along Orilla del Mar, behind the Mar Monte Hotel, which was not built until 1929.

When the Ambassador (formerly Potter) Hotel was destroyed by an arsonist in 1921, the north side of West Cabrillo Boulevard was soon clotted with tearooms, candy stores, skating rinks and small cafes catering to the tourist trade. A so-called "pleasure pier," owned by the electric company, jutted into the channel at the foot of Castillo Street and was a landmark from 1895 until 1929. The West Beach area after World War II became a high density zone filled with deluxe motels and apartment complexes, after the city turned down a chance to buy the 36-acre Potter grounds for a mere \$100,000 in 1921.

The most inspiring aspect of Santa Barbara waterfront's long history is the struggle waged by public-spirited citizens half a century ago to save East Beach from commercial exploitation, a struggle which is still going on. As early as 1903 the Park Commission recommended that the city purchase the old lumber yard situated east of the wharf. That took 28 years to accomplish.

"East Boulevard" along East Beach was completed in 1905 and became part of the Coast Highway. It washed out after a few weeks and was replaced in 1907. Not until 1919 did the city officially name the waterfront street "Cabrillo Boulevard" both east and west of the wharf.



The large tidal marsh known as the Salt Pond, at the east end of the waterfront, had been purchased by a group of 60 philanthropists in 1906 and deeded to the city in 1909. Later Mrs. Mary A. Clark spent \$50,000 to dredge the pond and convert it into a fresh water lake, named in honor of her deceased daughter "Andree Clark Bird Refuge."

A wooden sea wall was built along East Beach in 1907. By 1924 the populace feared that developers were going to convert the beach west of Por la Mar Drive into a Coney Island type of honkytonk row. To prevent a future slum from taking root, Frederick Forrest Peabody, the Arrow Shirt tycoon, formed the "East Beach Improvement Association" to buy up private parcels and hold them in trust until the city could take them over. In 1927 the boulevard from Milpas to Anacapa Streets was moved 300 to 600 feet farther north. Another citizens' group headed by David Gray, Sr. bought up other portions of East Beach, including "Shoreacres," an ugly cluster of palm-thatched shacks rented to vacationers. Mr. and Mrs. Gray also built a \$100,000 pavilion at the eastern end of the waterfront, on the city's promise to furnish the interior. When City Hall reneged on its pledge the Grays went ahead and completed what is now known as the Cabrillo Arts Center. As a result of all this civic cooperation, the creation of beautiful Palm Park was possible.

The disastrous earthquake of June 29, 1925, buckled paving on East Boulevard, twisting and actually breaking street car rails. An ugly railroad roundhouse at Punta Gorda Street was demolished and, in keeping with Santa Barbara's post-quake "Spanish look"



A combination of high tides and a mountain cloudburst and flood resulted in the uprooting of West Beach palm trees and sidewalk damage in January 1914.



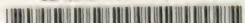
Palm-thatched huts of the "Shoreacres" development stood in 1920 at the site of today's Palm Park Recreation Center. [Photo courtesy Marion Donaldson]

renaissance, was rebuilt as a replica of the bullring in Madrid. The waterfront is recognized today as the city area most vulnerable to earthquake damage, due to the instability of its saturated soil near the ocean.

A year after the earthquake the Yacht Club moved into a clubhouse built on the wharf. The club's directors voted to close the place in 1938 due to "bad conduct and excessive drinking by certain non-sailing members." The clubhouse remained vacant until 1941 when it was leased by Ronald Colman and Al Weingand, owners of San Ysidro Ranch, and converted into the nationally-famous Harbor Restaurant.

But Santa Barbara was still without a harbor. A proposal in 1903 to build a municipal moorage basin for the benefit of local yachtsmen was rejected by a caste-conscious citizenry. In the early 1920s the Yacht Club conducted an engineering survey to determine the best location for an artificial harbor. Sacks of sawdust and empty jugs were set adrift from Hope Ranch to study current behavior. As a result of these tests the Yacht Club made two recommendations: (1) don't locate a harbor near West Beach, because prevailing currents would immediately shoal a moorage basin with sand while denuding beaches to bedrock farther to the east; and (2) the most feasible and economical solution would be to widen the natural inlet to the Salt Pond (Bird Refuge), install jetties at the entrance, and give Santa Barbara a completely land-locked anchorage, safe in any weather the year around.

In 1926 Major Max C. Fleischmann, the "yeast king," donated \$200,000 to build a breakwater if the city would match the funds. The Major was looking for a safe anchorage for his 250-foot luxury yacht Haida. In response to his offer the voters, perhaps unwisely, approved a \$200,000 harbor bond issue on May 4, 1927. Within a month, tons of igneous rock quarried on Santa Cruz Island were barged across the



channel and dumped into the roadstead — parallel to West Beach. By ignoring the Yacht Club's warning, city engineers made a mistake which has plagued the entire waterfront for half a century.

By June 1929 a thousand-foot breakwater of riprap (loose rocks) was completed. Major Fleischmann decided it was inadequate to shelter his yacht, and paid \$250,000 to extend the breakwater another 600 feet to the east. Later he would spend \$100,000 for a dike to connect the west end of the breakwater to the beach.

The new harbor was a boon for vacationists, pleasure boaters and commercial fishermen. But it opened a political Pandora's Box for the city fathers, troubles that will carry over into the 1980s. Why? Because the new breakwater, as engineers had warned, interrupted the flow of suspended sand which the littoral drift of the ocean had been distributing along the shoreline for thousands of years. Now, 775 cubic yards of sand per day were being precipitated to the bottom of the millpond-placid area inside the breakwater. When a groin was added to prevent the moorage basin from becoming a waste of dry sand dunes, a build-up of sand began west of the groin. Ten acres of newly accreted land, now called Leadbetter Beach, were deeded to the city by the State Legislature in 1937. A football gridiron now occupies the center of that accrued beach land.

Meanwhile, as Leadbetter Beach was forming, from the east came howls of anguish as upland owners including the newly-built Biltmore and Mar Monte Hotels saw tidal action scouring precious sand from beaches as far east as Sandyland and Carpinteria, exposing rocky



High tide on afternoon of June 28, 1928, toppled palm trees on Cabrillo Boulevard and damaged lumber yard east of Stearns Wharf.



Loughead [Lockheed] seaplanes manufactured in a State Street factory from 1916 to 1920 were launched from a ramp opposite 336 West Cabrillo Boulevard.

bottom. When a sea wall of planks and pilings was washed out by winter waves, the city at enormous expense poured a dike of buried rocks along East Beach in 1940. This stabilized the sand erosion, but a vast sand bar began curling like the tail of a comma from the outer end of the breakwater, encroaching on the harbor entrance.

Both wharf and harbor were closed by the Navy during World War II, terminating the Harbor Restaurant. Actor James Cagney paid \$200,000 for the run-down wharf in 1945, then sold it to Leo Sanders in 1948. The wharf deteriorated rapidly during Sanders' stewardship



East Beach street car tracks severed by Santa Barbara earthquake of 1925.

and he was glad to sell out for \$125,000 in 1955. The new owners, George V. Castagnola's Santa Barbara Wharf Company Inc., poured more than a million dollars into repairing the wharf and converting the old Harbor Restaurant into one of the finest gourmet establishments on the coast. Its total destruction by fire in April 1973, and the city's take-over of the wharf franchise that fall, led to the rapid disintegration of Stearns Wharf, a problem which is currently in the process of solution.

The growing sand bar at the end of the breakwater forced the taxpayers in 1959 to buy a \$250,000 dredge and a \$127,000 tender in an effort to keep the harbor open, a \$100,000 annual expenditure. In the spring of 1976 the city was even forced to enlist the aid of the Army Corps of Engineers, after the Coast Guard cutter Point Judith had to move to Ventura to escape being bottled up by sand blocking the exit channel. This costly dredging program will continue ad infinitum.

A black, malignant tide of crude oil invaded the Santa Barbara anchorage and fouled the coastline as a result of Union Oil Company's drilling accident on Platform A off Summerland on January 28, 1969. The city was later awarded \$4,500,000 damages from the oil spill.

A full decade after that traumatic experience, City Hall is still studying what to do with Stearns Wharf, how to uncork the bottleneck of the crosstown 101 Freeway flanking the waterfront, and whether to go ahead with a proposed convention center and condominium community on railroad property fronting historic East Beach. These issues await resolution in the upcoming 1980s. Only one thing is predictable: storms will always lash the Santa Barbara waterfront, be they man-made or meteorological. But these stresses are not noticed by the tourist or even the average Santa Barbaran; they take pride in their waterfront as a thing of great beauty and everlasting interest.

THE END



The mooring basin behind the breakwater in February 1940, prior to the construction of the Navy Pier, Naval Reserve Armory, Yacht Club headquarters, harbormaster's office, marina slips and Fisherman's Wharf. [Gorin photo]



Santa Barbara Harbor and Leadbetter Beach in summer of 1969.
The cover picture is from an 1874 stereoscope view of wharf.

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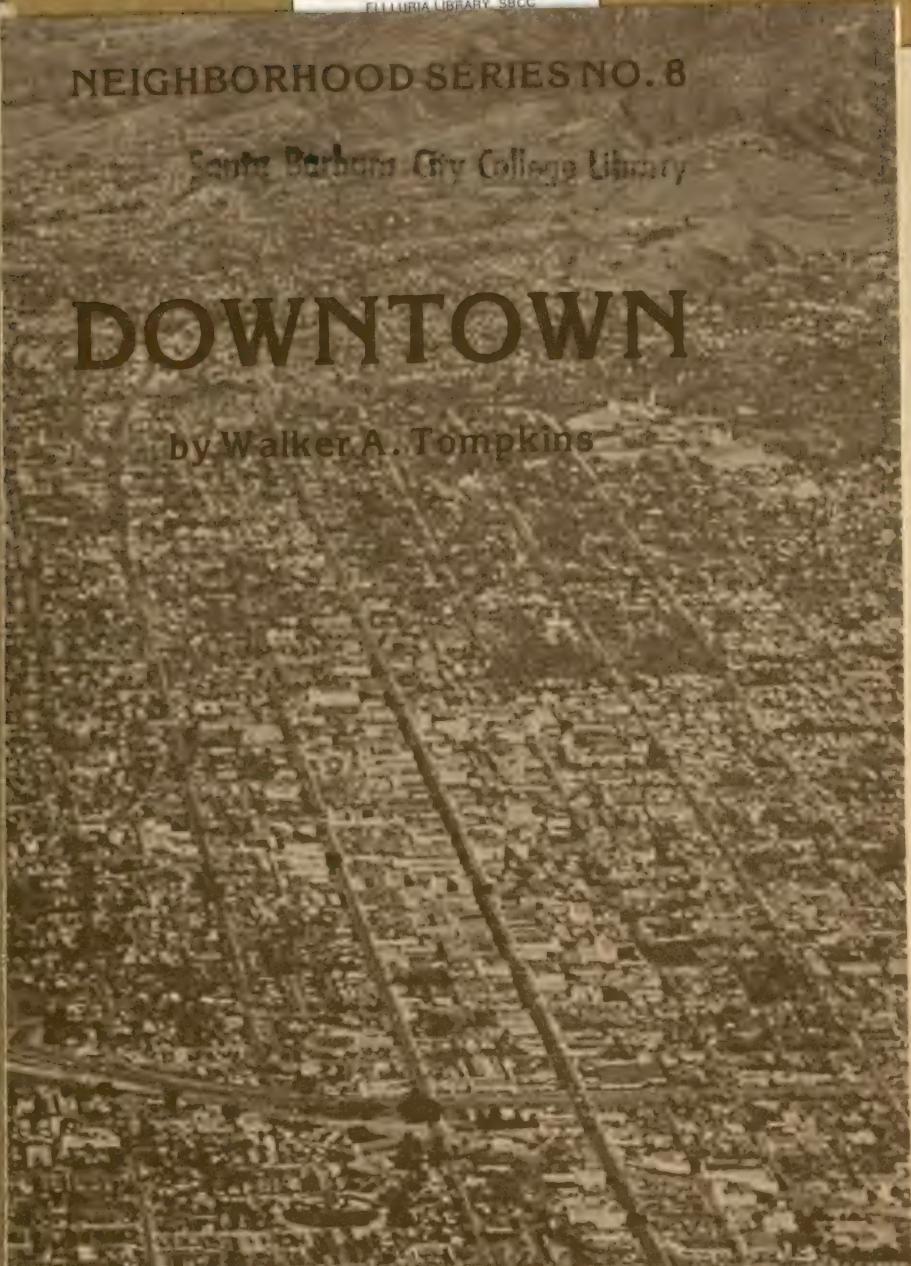


NEIGHBORHOOD SERIES NO. 8

Santa Barbara City College Library

DOWNTOWN

by Walker A. Tompkins



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CASA DE LA GUERRA as it appeared from top of city hall in 1920.

DOWNTOWN

By Walker A. Tompkins

During the seven somnolent decades between the founding of the Royal Presidio and the creation of an American system of streets, "downtown Santa Barbara" comprised about five dozen adobes scattered around the presidio quadrangle which centered on the future intersection of Santa Barbara and Canon Perdido Streets. These adobes had been located in such helter-skelter fashion, with total disregard for the compass points, that an early-day chronicler reported that Santa Barbara's houses "must have been fired from a blunderbuss."

Four months prior to California's admission to the Union in 1850, Santa Barbara's civil government was changed from a Mexican ayuntamiento to an American-style Common Council. One of this body's first official acts was to allocate \$2,000 from the town treasury to pay for laying out a grid of streets from the beach to the Old Mission gardens and extending from the Mesa to the Riviera ridge.

The surveyor who won the contract was Salisbury Haley, skipper of the coastal steamer Seabird. His instructions were to plot two 80-foot intersecting principal streets (later named "State" to honor California's statehood, and "Carrillo" after a prominent Spanish family) with all other streets to be 60 feet wide and blocks 450 feet square.

Captain Haley began his survey by hammering an iron stake to designate the future "midtown" — State and Carrillo. From that point on the accuracy of his survey went awry, reputedly because he mended his measuring chain with rawhide thongs which expanded or contracted with the humidity. As a result, our city blocks vary somewhat in size.

Why Haley decided to orient the streets of Santa Barbara at a bias angle from true North is anybody's guess. Historians have advanced several logical explanations, but the end result was confusion to everyone who expected building lots to be square with the world.

Santa Barbara City College Library

Newcomers still have difficulty understanding that the Pacific Ocean lies south, rather than west of Santa Barbara.

At any rate, State Street established where the Americans' "downtown Santa Barbara" would be located. Haley's streets looked great on Wackenreuder's 1853 maps, but they were merely pencil lines which ignored existing structures. Many adobes, including the Presidio itself, found themselves squarely in the center of future streets and had to be demolished eventually to make way for the road graders and paving gangs. Lewis T. Burton, our first American mayor, owned an adobe which sprawled from curb to curb on State Street midway between Canon Perdido and Carrillo, forcing traffic to detour for 20 years.

Two owners flatly refused to vacate adobes which blocked East De la Guerra Street. One was the Leyva home at the southeast corner of De la Guerra and State; the other was an Arrellanes family adobe near today's Historical Society Museum at De la Guerra and Santa Barbara. This resulted in the "jogs" which route De la Guerra Street around the north end of City Hall today.

The old San Carlos or St. Charles Hotel, dating from 1834, stood at 807 State Street and conformed to Haley's northwest-by-southeast orientation. It was unique in that it had two stories and a shingled roof rather than tile — a Yankee innovation of its builder, Alpheus B. Thompson, a sea captain in the China and Sandwich Island trade, who built it as a home for his bride, Francisca Carrillo. Thompson's first home was built of redwood nearer the beach but it was destroyed by an incendiary fire the day it was finished, a fire set by a local adobe brick maker who feared wooden houses would jeopardize his business.



COLLEGE BUILDING at State and Anapamu [now San Marcos Building] as it was in 1879. The brick veneer building, built in 1868, was demolished in 1914.



MULE-DRAWN STREETCARS plied State Street from Sola to Stearns Wharf.

The Thompson adobe was commandeered by Col. John C. Fremont in 1846 to house the staff of his California Battalion, and again by the New York Volunteers who maintained martial law in Santa Barbara from April 1847 until the fall of 1848. The building was known as the St. Charles Hotel in 1913 when it was razed to make way for new construction which is now part of the Piccadilly Square complex.

The adobe era was phased out during the 1850s as three flourishing brickyards ushered in the era of brick houses. Since redwood lumber from the busy sawmills of Santa Cruz had to be floated ashore through the surf, wooden houses did not become common until after Stearns Wharf was completed in September of 1872.

The Americanization of downtown Santa Barbara accelerated during the 1860s with a proliferation of livery stables, hardware and drygoods stores, meat markets and saloons, mostly north of Ortega Street. Of the first 50 business licenses issued by the Common Council, more than half had been for saloons, and most of these located on the east or sunny side of State Street. The west or shady side was preferred by most other merchants, because shoppers were more likely to walk in the shade. Since saloons were largely nocturnal, sun or shade was not a factor. A California-Mexican barrio built up between De la Guerra and Carrillo Streets, but closer to Anacapa than to State. At that time, De la Guerra Plaza was fenced in to serve as a bullfighting arena.

The American Hotel at the southeast corner of Cota and State became the terminal for Santa Barbara's first stagecoach traffic in 1861, where passengers boarded Concord mudwagons for the torturous journey to San Luis Obispo or Los Angeles.

Climaxing the downtown growth of the 1860s was the opening of the "Santa Barbara College," a large brick building with a mansard-roofed tower which stood at the southwest corner of State and Anapamu. It was owned by a stock company headed by Col. W. W. Hollister, a wealthy retired sheep rancher and Santa Barbara's

foremost citizen. The college opened its doors for the fall semester of 1869 but its career as an educational institution was short lived and the building was later known as the Ellwood Hotel, then the San Marcos Hotel. It was torn down in 1914 to make way for the original San Marcos Building.

The decade of the 1870s saw a ferment of modernization. In the fall of 1870 the Overland Telegraph strung its wires from San Francisco and a row of ugly poles marched up State Street. The following year a Kansan named Mortimer Cook arrived with a second-hand safe and \$40,000 in gold specie and opened Santa Barbara's first bank in a shack at 802 State Street. Simultaneously, Peter J. Barber, the town's premier architect, built a cupolaed, gingerbreaded Victorian mansion for Cook at 1407 Chapala, a landmark which is still standing next door to the headquarters of the Santa Barbara Board of Realtors.

In 1872 a talented Italian musician and saloonkeeper, Jose Lobero, erected Southern California's first opera house at the northwest corner of Anacapa and Canon Perdido, the largest adobe structure in California. Lobero's theater established Santa Barbara as a cultural center and stood until it was replaced by a modern community playhouse in 1924. In the 1870s the first block of East Canon Perdido was a Chinatown with more than 300 Orientals living there. Their joss house and lodge hall stood just west of the Lobero Theater. Chinese laundries, brothels, opium dens and retail stores jammed the neighborhood for over sixty years, until an urban renewal project erased them.

Lawyer Charles Fernald and physician Samuel B. Brinkerhoff founded the Santa Barbara Gas Company, manufacturing gas out of petroleum shipped from San Francisco in drums, which lighted State Street for the first time on the night of February 21, 1872. Prior to that



ORIGINAL ARLINGTON HOTEL and its Annex, left, which stood at Victoria and Chapala.



ORIGINAL CITY HALL stood in the center of De la Guerra Plaza until 1923.

date, a city ordinance had obligated property owners in "Pueblo Viejo" (both sides of State Street between Ortega and Carrillo) to hang a lighted lantern over their doorways from dusk until 10 p.m.

Another attorney, Robert B. Canfield, made a deal with the friars at the Old Mission to take water from Mission Creek and pipe it to paying customers downtown, starting on December 27, 1872. Three months previously lumberman John P. Stearns had opened his wharf which made Santa Barbara a port of call for coastal steam and sailing vessels.

Santa Barbara's first City Hall was built in the center of De la Guerra Plaza in 1874, its lower floor housing the city's first fire department, organized to combat the rising incidence of structural fires as Santa Barbara changed from brick to frame construction. A series of cisterns was spaced along State Street to provide water.

A commercial hotel district began to develop below Ortega Street. When the pioneer American Hotel burned down in 1871 it was replaced by the Occidental Hotel, later known as the Mascarel and after 1886 as the Commercial. The Shaw House at State and Haley was built in 1871 and later was renamed the Morris House. The most elegant downtown hotel was the Barbara, now known as the Schooner Inn.

In 1875, to accommodate the growing tide of wealthy tourists, Col. Hollister's Seaside Hotel Company built the 90-room luxury hotel known as the Arlington, between Sola and Victoria on State Street. Horse or mule-drawn streetcars ran on State Street from the Arlington to the foot of Stearns Wharf until replaced by electric trolleys 20 years later. The most prominent downtown landmark at this period was the Presbyterian Church at 1117 State, with its 134-foot steeple. Mortimer Cook's Clock Building stood on the southeast corner of State and Carrillo, its square tower boasting the city's first town clocks. Ott's Hardware, the County National Bank and Western Union Telegraph were established in 1875.

Going into the 1880s, Santa Barbara's population was 3,460. During that elegant decade Santa Barbara became nationally famous

as a fashionable health resort. Colonel Hollister died during the summer of 1886 and his leadership role was immediately taken by Walter N. Hawley, a San Francisco capitalist. Hawley gave Santa Barbara its first paved street, laying More Mesa asphaltum on State from Sola to the beach — this for the convenience of guests of the Arlington Hotel, which he purchased for \$100,000. Hawley built two "business blocks" in 1886, the Upper Hawley Block at 1229 State Street and the Lower Hawley Block at 1200 State, corner of Anapamu. Both Hawley buildings are still standing, the former refurbished as the Victoria Square complex.

The Sunset Telephone Company strung wires along State Street in 1886. The city's first real postoffice opened at 609 State in a leased store building. Charles Fernald started the Santa Barbara Electric Company, ending the gaslight era on the foggy night of March 19, 1887, when State Street was lighted by arc lamps for the first time.

Unfortunately, downtown Santa Barbara was an ugly place in the so-called Elegant Eighties, with an overhead tangle of telephone and telegraph wires, wooden awnings, plank sidewalks, ugly wood and brick store fronts, and unpaved streets which were a nightmare of blowing dust in summer and a quagmire of gluey mud during rainy season.

A big event that summer of 1887 was the arrival of the Southern Pacific's first railroad train on August 19, entering town via Gutierrez Street. The Chapala Street station was not built until 1905.

The city's first sewer system went into operation in 1890, at which time the population stood at 5,865. The following year Santa Barbara entertained its first presidential visitor, Benjamin Harrison. In his honor the city staged the first of many "Battles of the Flowers"



SHACKS AND ADOBES lined the east side of De la Guerra Plaza until the 1950s.



FIRST POST OFFICE, built in 1914, moved downtown in 1937 and is now the Museum of Art.

floral parades downtown. In 1898 a circus parade marched down State Street, with a one-cylinder horseless carriage in its vanguard. That noisy, smoky vehicle was the harbinger for the Automobile Age, which in the coming decade converted most of Santa Barbara's livery stables into garages. By 1905 there were twelve privately owned cars in town.

The Arlington Hotel burned to the ground in 1909 and was replaced in 1911 by the New Arlington in Mission Colonial style. Santa Barbara got its first movie theaters in the 600 and 700 blocks of State Street — La Petite, the Rose, the Argus and the Portola. They were called "nickelodeons" because they charged five cents admission, and their seating was limited to exactly 199, since the municipal amusement tax jumped from \$5 to \$50 for theaters seating 200 or more.

The city's first federally-built postoffice opened in 1914 at the southeast corner of State and Anapamu, serving until 1937 when a new federal building was erected at Anacapa and Canon Perdido Streets. The old postoffice is now the beautiful Museum of Art.

The Loughead (Lockheed) brothers built seaplanes in a garage at 101 State Street from 1916 until 1920. Malcolm Lockheed tested his new invention, four-wheel brakes for automobiles, on Anacapa Street for the first time in American automotive history. In 1920, the city built its first skyscraper, the eight-story Granada Building in the 1200 block of State Street.

Two historic landmarks, the Lobero Theater and City Hall, were torn down and replaced with modern edifices in 1924. City Hall was rebuilt on the site of the old Raffeur House, opening De la Guerra Plaza for park purposes, fronting the then-new Daily News building.

That same year, as part of a grandiose scheme to create a north-south boulevard equal to State Street, Chapala was widened ten feet on either side between the Moreton Bay Fig Tree and Anapamu Street, a project which caused the removal or condemnation of many buildings. It also put an end to a local institution, the farmers' open air market.

Banks, brokerage houses and savings and loan firms began grouping along State Street from De la Guerra to Carrillo, while lawyers and title companies moved into the neighborhood around the courthouse. The Carrillo Hotel and the Central Building (later the "Benjamin Franklin" and still later the Balboa Building) were changes in the downtown skyline during the early Twenties. Prohibition, meanwhile, had put an end to the numerous saloons on State Street.

The major event in downtown history was the devastating earthquake of June 29, 1925, which killed 13 and did \$15,000,000 property damage, mostly on State Street, which was jammed with rubble from the brand-new Californian Hotel near the beach to the Trinity Church. The street did not reopen for traffic until the following January 20. Out of the earthquake tragedy, however, was born the new Santa Barbara's Hispanic-Mediterranean look which led to its being hailed as one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

Downtown merchants were servicing a city of 34,000 inhabitants during the depression Thirties, when growth was virtually zero. One victim of the hard times was Diehl's Grocery in the Howard-Canfield Building, famous all over the world for its gourmet specialties, its candy factory and its soda fountain which was a town rendezvous spot.

World War II, especially after the Japanese submarine attack on Ellwood which resulted in nightly blackouts, made life difficult for downtown merchants. A black market in tires, and unscrupulous dealers selling used cars at more than new car prices, were wartime scandals which were heavily criticized in News-Press editorials.



EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE to the Californian Hotel, left; and Diehl's Grocery's final location.



ELECTRIC TRAMS serviced State Street. Granada Building was the town's first skyscraper. Hawley Building on corner dates from 1886.

After the war a population explosion brought prosperity back to the downtown area. Indicative of the city's new growth was the installation of its first stop-and-go signal lights at three State Street intersections, on November 21, 1947. Since then traffic has increased a hundredfold.

The Goleta Valley's population tripled to equal the size of Santa Barbara as a result of the Cachuma water project in 1956. Almost overnight, it seemed, the population center of the South Coast shifted to outer State Street. Anticipating this, in the late 1950s developers converted lemon groves into shopping centers at Five Points, Loreto Plaza and San Roque Plaza. In the fall of 1967 an even more ominous economic shadow fell over the downtown business district: the \$20 million La Cumbre Plaza shopping center. In their first year of operation La Cumbre merchants siphoned away customers until their volume of retail sales exceeded those of downtown merchants, whose volume skidded 15 percent in 12 months. Several downtown firms panicked and moved to the north end to join their competitors.

Faced by the grim spectre of "inner city decay" which so often follows any exodus of buying power to the outskirts of a city, in 1966 merchants formed a "Downtown Organization" out of the old Retail Merchants' Association, and downtown's struggle for survival got under way.

The D.O. persuaded 62 percent of its membership to approve assessments to create a "Downtown Plaza" and pedestrian mall on State Street from Ortega to Victoria, designed by the controversial architect Robert Ingle Hoyt. Parking was prohibited along that six block span of State Street, leading to the establishment of municipal parking garages and open lots, free to the public, with entrances off Chapala and Anacapa Streets. Stately palms and evergreens

landscaped the wide, red-tiled sidewalks, along with modernistic concrete furniture.

Results were spectacular. Against all precedent, the downtown area's decaying process was arrested. The central city achieved a new image as it had done after the 1925 quake. By July 1976, in part due to parking and traffic congestion at the northside shopping centers, 44 percent of all retail dollars spent on the South Coast went into the cash registers of downtown merchants. This in turn led to an upgrading of buildings such as Piccadilly Square, Victoria Square, and the general refurbishing of the "Old Town" area.

Businessmen are currently directing their attention to cleaning up the shabby lower State Street area where once respectable hotels became flophouses, transient winos panhandled on the sidewalks, and greasy spoon restaurants, gay bars, a pornographic "adult" bookstore and musty rummage stores had proliferated since the mid-1940s.

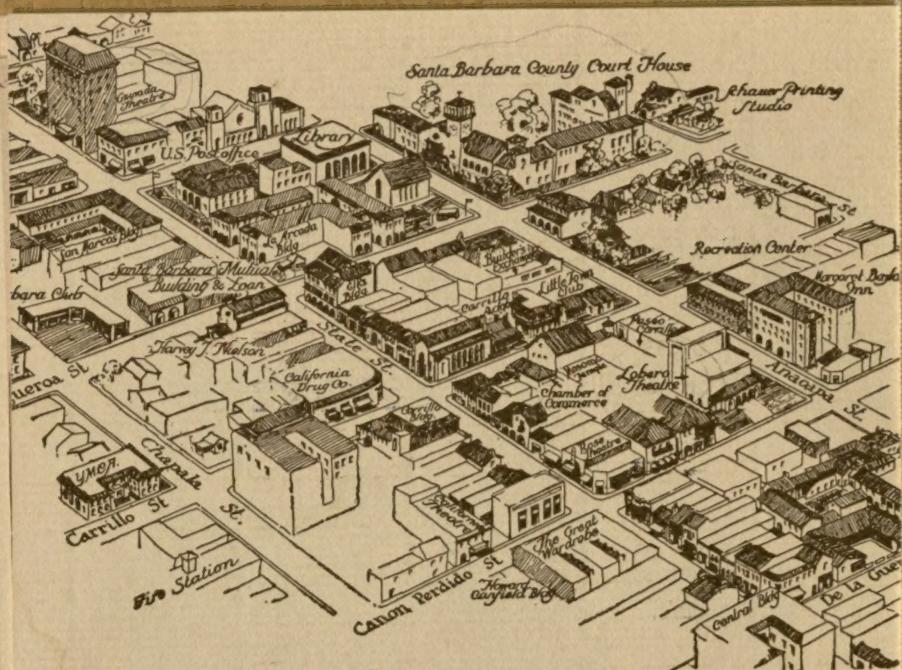
Much of this was due to uncertainty about urban renewal plans riding on the realignment of the crosstown freeway, still an unresolved problem. Present plans call for a southward extension of the Downtown Plaza from Ortega Street toward the beach, turning a potential slum into a grand avenue.

As Santa Barbara goes into the decade of the 1980s, its downtown business section is viable and future prospects are very bright indeed.

THE END



BANK BUILDINGS of the 1920s resembled Greek temples, as the Commercial Bank at 805 State.



HALF A CENTURY ago, engineer Wallace Penfield sketched the downtown business district.

Compliments of

Coming in December — Neighborhood Booklet No. 9
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